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ABSTRACT

A workshop was developed based on the work of Jacob Kounin, who identified many variables that are representative of teacher style and are strongly correlated with children's behavior in recitation settings. His work reviewed "desist" techniques employed by teachers to stop children's misbehaviors. The first step in developing the workshop consisted of a teacher videotaping a simulated teaching episode in a junior high mathematics class in an effort to demonstrate the concepts outlined by Kounin. Seven vignettes were extracted from the original product and a voice-over was recorded explaining the Kounin terminology, episode by episode. A description is given of the step-by-step development of the workshop format, its presentation to a group of inservice teachers, and an evaluation of the program by participants. Kounin's definition of terms on the dimensions of classroom management are appended, as well as a sample of the evaluation instrument for the inservice program. (JD)

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The Development of a Classroom Management Workshop Through an Inservice Training Program

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As part of the ongoing Temple University-Trenton Discipline Project (1982), teacher inservice training in classroom management is conducted. It is offered as a one year course for school staff. The course is taught by school psychologists affiliated with the project. In one of these inservice training groups, various projects were assigned to group members. This paper focuses on one such project. It is the goal of this presentation to demonstrate how a teacher can become a turnkey through the development of inservice materials that can eventually be used to work with other teachers in the system.

One of the participating teachers was assigned the task of developing a workshop based on the work of Jacob Kounin (1970). Kounin, who embraces an ecological frame of reference, identified many variables that are representative of teacher style and strongly correlate with children's behavior in recitation settings. These findings culminate five years of study in which Kounin and his associates reviewed, through "objective records" (human observation), the techniques employed by teachers to stop children's misbehavior. He labeled these efforts as "desist" techniques. The eventual realization that the "objective records" were not particularly objective led Kounin and his colleagues to employ videotape which, they believed, would serve as a more efficient data-gathering medium.

Kounin concluded that while there appears to be little

relationship between qualities of a teacher's desist efforts and the degree of his/her success in handling a deviancy, there are dimensions of teacher behavior that do correlate with children's behavior. These dimensions are briefly described in Appendix A (Kounin, 1970).

Kounin's work has demonstrated that classroom behavior is lawful, suggesting that its interrelationships have the potential to be discovered (Kounin, 1970).

The above-mentioned teacher, with the assistance of a Temple University graduate student, prepared a script, went into her own junior high school math class, and videotaped a simulated teaching episode in an effort to demonstrate the concepts outlined by Kounin.[1] Thus, the first step in a somewhat lengthy process was accomplished.

The next step was the development of an actual workshop based on the videotape. Another Temple graduate student undertook this task.[2] The tape was edited, resulting in the addition of a second part. This was comprised of seven vignettes extracted from the initial product, as well as a voice-over explaining the Kounin terminology, episode by episode. Based on this, a set of procedures defining the workshop was developed. The sequence began with an introduction, including the purpose of the workshop and an overview of the ecological perspective, followed by videotape presentation, where teachers were asked individually to note errors (Videotape-Part 1) and develop alternatives in small group (Videotape-Part 2). The trainer's

task was to add any intervention strategies that hadn't been generated by the group. Finally, Kounin's definition of terms was reviewed and the workshop was summarized.

The question as to whether this workshop was worthwhile, in terms of serving the needs of teachers, remained to be determined and became the final step in the process of development. This was the charge of the present author. The obvious way of answering this question was to conduct the workshop with a group of teachers and request feedback at the termination of the session.

In an effort to gather this information in the most productive fashion, an evaluation form was constructed (Appendix B). Workshop materials and procedures (videotape, small group discussion, overall discussion) were rated (Very helpful 1 to 5 Not Helpful) according to how well they facilitated the understanding of the material. The notion of whether the workshop spoke to practical concerns of teachers and offered reasonable alternatives was also addressed. This was rated in the same manner. Additional comments were requested following each of the ratings. The evaluation concluded with an open-ended question that inquired how the individual would redesign the workshop had it been his/her responsibility.

A school psychologist who currently runs inservice training in classroom management for teachers, agreed to allow the group to serve as evaluators of the workshop.[3] Twenty-three individuals composed the group. The workshop was conducted as

previously outlined. Evalution forms were completed and handed in upon termination of the session.

A review of the evaluations indicated that the videotape, small group discussion, and overall discussion were all considered helpful with reference to the understanding of the material. Of the three, relatively speaking, the small group discussion appeared to be regarded as most helpful. The use of the workshop with student teachers was strongly advocated by the group.

A relative weakness appeared to be the ability of the developed procedure to speak to practical concerns of teachers and offer reasonable alternatives to discipline problems. The additional comments aided the author in determining the nature of the difficulty more accurately. It appeared that many of the teachers were looking for more suggestions on how to handle the disruptions that had been portrayed in the tape. Moreover, some expressed concerns that the depicted situations were somewhat mild in comparison to the disruptions they deal with on a daily basis.

Based on the feedback of ratings and comments, steps were taken to reorganize and refine the existing product. Part 2 of the videotape was subjected to some minor editing. Labels were inserted at appropriate points, indicating exactly where the Kounin concept was being demonstrated. This was done in an effort to reinforce the Kounin terminology, as well as to offer further clarification concerning which incident illustrated the

concept.

Further refinement was accomplished through reorganization. The introduction was expanded to include a brief history of workshop development, emphasizing the fact that a fellow teacher had served as the pioneer in this endeavor. The following issues were also covered as part of the introduction:

a. It is impressed upon the participants that the situations portrayed in the videotape are simulated. While they may or may not be representative of their specific classroom experiences, the ideas presented may be viewed as potential problems that, left unchecked, can interfere with the teacher's ability to maintain effective classroom management.

b. It is acknowledged that awareness of these concepts alone is not a panacea. They are to be viewed as a piece of a puzzle that, when complete, represents total classroom harmony.

Following the introduction, each individual is instructed to note the teaching errors as Part 1 of the videotape is played. An overall sharing of the identified errors, which are posted (board or chart) by the trainer, then takes place.

Employing an overhead projector, Kounin's concepts are then reviewed. Participants are shown how the errors they noted fit into the Kounin framework.

Part 2 of the videotape designates the movement of the

workshop to the next phase. Instructed to form small groups at this time, teachers are charged with the task of developing alternative approaches to the difficulties they have observed. The tape is stopped following each of the episodes, affording the group time to discuss what they have just seen. In addition, each participant receives a handout which outlines the errors per episode. Upon completion of the seven episodes, a spokesperson from each group is asked to share the group's views with the overall group.

The final phase of the workshop is devoted to a general discussion of alternatives, based on several approaches to discipline and classroom management. References are made available. The discussion is framed in a manner that questions. "What is the teacher trying to accomplish?" and "What are some productive ways to meet these goals?" Kounin's work is used to demonstrate how teachers can defeat their own purposes without being aware of their involvement in the process.[4] Time is of course allotted for summary and feedback.

The above description of workshop development demonstrates how the creative use of inservice training can result in a valuable, far-reaching product. It is also a fine example of how a teacher can serve as a model in the parallel systems approch. This has been described by Hyman as "a system which functions alongside a currently existing system and self-perpetuates as it expands to become the major system" (1976). It appears that teacher involvement in the inservice process supports this

approach, contributing to the neutralization of opposition through its inherent unobtrusive nature.

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Footnotes

[1] Mary Klabbatz must be acknowledged as the pioneer in the development of this workshop. Mariann Pokalo is the Temple graduate student who assisted her in this effort.

[2] Barbara Frascella is credited with developing a workshop from the initial videotape.

[3] Special thanks are offered to John Lamberth of the Trenton School District for his assistance in the refinement of this project.

[4] More information on obtaining the workshop may be obtained by writing to:

The National Center for the Study of Corporal Punishment and Alternatives in the Schools
253 Ritter Hall South
Philadelphia, PA. 19122
(215) 787-6091 or (215) 787-6093

Appendix A

Dimensions of Classroom Management

Kounin's Definition of Terms

1. With-it-ness refers to the teacher's communication to the children that he/she knows what the children are doing, or has the proverbial "eyes in the back of his/her head." It can be further broken down to target and timing mistakes.

A. The child or subgroup desisted by the teacher constitutes the target. A target mistake takes place when a teacher desists the wrong child/children for a deviant act or desists an onlooker rather than an initiator. It can also occur when the teacher desists a less serious deviancy and overlooks a more serious deviancy that is occurring at the same time.

B. If the deviancy spreads before it is desisted, or if it increased in seriousness before it was desisted, a with-it-ness timing error is said to have taken place.

In both of these cases, the teacher has demonstrated that he/she is not "with it", that he/she, in fact, does not know what is going on in the class.

2. Overlapping refers to what the teacher does when he/she has two matters to deal with at the same time. It does not judge whether the job of handling the simultaneous events was adequate or not; it merely notes whether both events were acknowledged in some fashion.

3. Momentum management is concerned with the momentum and smoothness of the class.

Momentum looks at the teacher's behavior with respect to the rate of flow of activities. As can be seen, this can be broken down further.

Overdwelling occurs when the teacher dwells on an issue and engages in a stream of action or talk that is clearly beyond what is necessary for most children's understanding of an activity. There are four types of overdwelling. Behavior overdwelling can be equated with "nagging" or "preaching". Actone overdwelling focuses on a subpart of a more inclusive behavior. An overemphasis on props (pencils, crayons, etc.) takes place in prop overdwelling. Finally, task overdwelling occurs when the teacher overelaborates directions and explanations beyond what is necessary for most to understand.

Fragmentation, another way of disrupting momentum, takes place when a teacher breaks an activity down into sub-parts when it could have been performed by the group as a unit. In group fragmentation a teacher has a single member do something separately that the whole group could have accomplished as a unit at one time. Prop or actone fragmentation occurs when the teacher fragments a meaningful unit of behavior into smaller components when the behavior could have been performed as a single uninterrupted sequence.

Smoothness of movement in academic activities can be disrupted in a variety of ways.

Stimulus boundedness occurs when the teacher behaves as though he/she has no will of his/her own and reacts to some

unplanned and irrelevant stimulus. It is a question of whether the teacher maintains focus or is easily deflected from it.

Thrust takes place when a teacher suddenly "bursts in" on children's activities without considering the group's readiness to receive his/her message.

When a teacher begins or has been engaged in one activity and then leaves it "hanging in midair" by switching to some other activity, a dangle is said to have occurred. Following the fade away, the teacher resumes the initial activity.

A truncation is the same as a dangle, except the teacher does not resume the initial activity.

A flip-flop error is coded only at transition points. It entails terminating one activity, starting another, and then initating a return to the initial activity.

The notion of whether a teacher can maintain group focus is viewed in relation to group alerting and accountability. The former refers to the degree to which a teacher engages in actions that involve non-reciting children in the recitation task, maintains their attention, and keeps them "on their toes" or alerted. It can be positive, such as creating suspense before calling on a child to recite (not sharing order of recitation, introducing challenge), or negative, such as becoming totally immersed in one reciter and losing awareness of the group, prepicking a reciter before the question is asked, and having reciters perform in a predetermined sequence. Accountability refers to the degree to which the teacher holds children

responsible for their task perfomances during recitation sessions.

Appendix B

Evaluation of Workshop

1. In reference to your understanding of the material, how helpful were the following methods?

	Very Helpful				Not Helpful
Videotape	1	2	3	4	5

Please comment.

Overhead	1	2	3	4	5

Please comment.

Small Group Discussion	1	2	3	4	5

Please comment.

Overall Discussion	1	2	3	4	5

Please comment.

2. To what extent does this workshop speak to teachers' practical concerns and offer reasonable alternatives?

Greatly				Little
1	2	3	4	5

Please comment.

3. In general, if you were to redesign this workshop, how might you improve it ?